Douglas MacArthur Elementary School

Cleveland Municipal School District

Douglas MacArthur - Closed at the end of the 2004-2005 school year

Cleveland, Ohio

Chief Executive Officer: Barbara Byrd-Bennett Principal: Julie Bergstue-Hall

Douglas MacArthur Elementary School, serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade, was the only year-round school in the Cleveland area. Unfortunately, it was closed at the end of the 2004-2005 school year. At this Magnet School, enrollment was

by parental request, and children, 83.7% of whom were economically disadvantaged, attended from all areas of Cleveland. Recognized as a School of Promise for three consecutive years, the school provided quality standards-based instruction with a focus on literacy throughout the curriculum. Report cards identified the standards against which students were evaluated by grade level. Parents committed to support their child's

SCHOOL PROFILE	
2003-2004 Building Rating	Effective
Enrollment	199
Grade Levels	K-5
Economically Disadvantaged Students	83.7%
Students with Disabilities	20%
Black Students	63.1%
Hispanic Students	5.8%
Multi-racial Students	6.2%
White Students	23.3%

learning at home by signing a school compact identifying what they would do to help their students. A positive atmosphere in which to learn was promoted through the

school's kindness theme and a shared leadership model.

Douglas MacArthur Elementary

School was one of 14 elementary schools that was identified as a 2003 –

CLEVELAND MUNICIPAL DISTRICT PROFILE	
2003-2004 District Rating	Academic Watch
District Enrollment	66,532

2004 School of Promise with special recognition given for improving the performance of students with disabilities. Eighty percent of their fourth grade students with disabilities scored proficient of above on the mathematics section of the Ohio Proficiency Test (OPT), an increase of 30% from the previous school year. Additionally, they were recognized for 84.6% of all fourth graders passing the mathematics section of the OPT. (See bar graphs at the end of this report.)

Designing Instruction to Ensure every Student's Success

Douglas MacArthur's ability to design instruction to insure every student's success was due, in large part, to

- year-round schooling;
- all-day kindergarten;
- a focus on literacy throughout the curriculum;
- integration of music, art, dance and drama in multiple subject areas;
- high-interest curriculum materials aligned to state standards; and flexible classroom configurations.

Douglas MacArthur was a child-centered Magnet School where children were encouraged to reach their highest potential in all areas of academic and social growth.

The school year began at the end of July and ended in the middle of June; the academic calendar was adjusted so that no school breaks lasted longer than three weeks, thus adding 20 extra days to a school year. The staff was committed to optimizing the extra school days to ensure student success. At-risk students, in particular, benefited from the year-round concept. The routine and structure, as well as the academics, continued so little time was needed for review. Also, although some students left the school during the year, no new students joined, so time was not needed to get new students up to speed.

Students at Douglas MacArthur received an excellent introduction to academics through an all-day kindergarten program. Beginning then, quality standards-based instruction was provided with a focus on literacy throughout the curriculum. The elements of a six-building block framework for literacy used at the kindergarten level were 1) desire to learn to read and write--comprehension; 2) letters and sounds--phonics; 3) print concepts--fluency; 4) interesting words--vocabulary; 5) phonemic awareness and 6) language concepts. By the end of kindergarten, all students were able to read and write.

Several years ago all teachers in grades one through five were trained in the Four Block Literacy Framework, a multi-method, multi-level framework consisting of 1) guided reading--fluency and comprehension; 2) self-selected reading--comprehension; 3) working with words--phonics, phonemic awareness, and 4) vocabulary and writing. Following this literacy framework, the school had its students engage daily in a 120-minute block of high-quality literacy instruction designed to meet their needs. Best practices from this methodology, as well as other initiatives, have been imbedded into the Cleveland Literacy System which is now being implemented district-wide.

A full-time music and arts teacher worked closely with the general education teachers to coordinate student performance goals across the curriculum. For example, in art and music classes, students developed written reports and critiques of artwork and music. In general education classes, art, music, dance and drama were integrated into instructional units through role-playing, singing, movement and visual aids. When students were studying the history of the Amish, the art teacher had the students create a quilt, an activity that required the use of math while using shapes and measurements. School-wide projects, the culmination of instructional units, often incorporated art, drama, dance and music. During the Schools of Promise visit, the art teacher informed the team members that she had just been notified that one of their students, a child with autism, had been awarded the "Best of Show" Award in the All-City Arts Festival.

This past year, the Cleveland Opera worked with the second through fifth graders to coordinate the presentation of an operetta at the school. Using materials sent in advance by the opera, the school's teachers prepared the students to become the chorus supporting the opera stars. The students practiced with the opera staff twice before the performance for the entire school. Students also created the backdrops for the performance in art class and studied history that related to the opera in their regular classrooms.

In addition to using art, music, dance and drama throughout the curriculum, teachers team-taught and used a variety of teaching strategies

"My math teacher demonstrates a lot. Like he said, parallel lines were like roads that never touched." A special education student

and student groupings. For example, the two fourth grade teachers teamed with the

intervention specialist to provide instruction to 23 fourth graders in math. The Interactive Math program, developed by a Cleveland City Schools teacher, was used. One teacher presented the material, and the other two teachers moved around the room to provide individual assistance and correct student work. Various visual aids were used in the math presentations. Each problem was reviewed with the entire class, and students had the opportunity to practice. Rubrics of expectations were provided for the work. Each completed problem was worth points that the students recorded on their worksheets. Students waited quietly or talked quietly among themselves when someone needed additional help.

Classrooms at Douglas MacArthur were arranged in pods, with four classrooms to a pod. This allowed teachers, including the intervention specialists, to team-teach easily, provided mixed-grade teaching, utilized flexible grouping for instruction based on need and allowed easy sharing of materials, equipment and ideas.

One of this school's major goals for the 2003-2004 school year, as well as the preceeding two years, was to increase the inclusion of special needs students in the regular education classrooms. During the 2003-2004 school year the staff at Douglas MacArthur included four intervention specialists and five instructional aides who provided services to students who were autistic and students with learning and cognitive disabilities. (There was also a preschool special education class) One of the intervention specialists, "the inclusion teacher," worked full time in the fourth and fifth grade classrooms where he team-taught science and math. Another intervention specialist reported that she both team-taught and provided specialized instruction in the resource room. She also indicated she communicated daily with the regular education teachers regarding the curriculum and modifications that needed to be provided for the students. Two of the intervention specialists were assigned to work with students with autism. All of the intervention specialists commented on the year-round concept, indicating that it especially benefited children with special needs. They reported that the year-round schedule resulted in very little down time, without the typical six weeks of getting started each year--of going over school routines and what was learned last school year.

PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

In 1999, even before the Ohio Department of Education developed its Academic Content Standards, the staff members at Douglas MacArthur developed curriculum maps to monitor the teaching of desired proficiency outcomes. At the same time, the Cleveland Municipal School District developed English Language Arts Standards that were very similar to the current state curriculum, and to which Douglas MacArthur aligned its instruction. Currently, all district textbooks align to state standards. School staff members created their own grade level instructional grids detailing learning outcomes as well as the guarter, month and week each outcome should be taught.

Staff members continually monitored and assessed student progress toward standards. After examining data from the prior year's testing, teachers formed flexible student groups based upon students' strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate intervention approaches were used in these flexible groups. Teachers also did an item analysis of the results of the practice proficiency tests and identified what each student knew and did not know. The school received a grant to implement the Student Preparation Initiative (SPI), a technology-based program that tests the skills corresponding with Ohio's grade level indicators. The SPI was used as a pretest in the

fall and as a post-test in the spring for students in third, fourth and fifth grades. This computerized program informed students what they got wrong, explained the correct answer, and provided drill worksheets for further practice. The program also created color-coded class summary sheets showing which students had mastered the indicators and who needed additional work. The principal reported that this program had resulted in improved test scores.

Teachers often relied upon the building's Intervention-Based Assistance (IBA) Team for help in identifying interventions to address both academic and social problems. The team was comprised of the principal, teachers, parents, school psychologist, school nurse, speech therapist and any other staff members who worked with the student being referred. The Cuyahoga Special Education Regional Resource Center (SERRC) provided training for this team. All teachers, including intervention specialists, made referrals to the IBA team. The principal reported that this team was critical to the culture of the school. She indicated that the team played an important role in enabling students to be successful by providing teachers with support to implement instructional and behavioral intervention strategies.

An extended-day tutoring program was provided for students who did not pass the previous year's proficiency test or did not meet a cutoff score on the Stanford Achievement Test. (This past year, the tutoring was provided during lunchtime due to a busing issue.) Despite the fact that this tutoring program is voluntary, almost all eligible students received parental permission to attend.

When the district shifted to a standards-based curriculum, it created standards-based report cards that identify the specific skills the student must master to meet standards in each subject area. The students are rated from a one to four on each standard: 1, attempts the standards; 2, approaches the standards/meets some of the standards; 3, meets the standards; and 4, exceeds the standards. The goal is to get each child to earn a rating of three or four. Each school in the district determines the marking period in which each of the standards is tested. The district has provided pacing guides in reading, math, and science for each indicator of the Standard. Douglas MacArthur staff made sure to cover everything in a timely manner. Prior to report cards coming out, the principal went over everything with the teachers to insure that they were covering what was needed. The same curriculum was used for special education students with accommodations and modifications provided as specified in their IEPs. Monthly teacher-made common assessments monitored student progress in the core subjects. Mid-year interim assessments in reading and math were designed by the school district.

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTS IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The district sets stringent goals for improvement in each building. The Cleveland City Schools Executive Officer (CEO) sets targets for scores on the proficiency and achievement tests specific to each building. For example, last year, 78% of the third grade students at Douglas MacArthur passed the third grade reading achievement test. The target set for the 2004-2005 school year was that 88% of the third graders would pass the reading achievement test. How well a building meets these targets was part of the data used for the principal's evaluation.

Douglas MacArthur's principal, Julie Bergstue-Hall, used a shared leadership model to allow her to spend more time observing in classrooms. She tapped into her staff members' individual strengths by delegating responsibility to them. Ms. Bergstue-

Hall, who views herself as an instructional leader, found her biggest challenge was getting into the classroom as frequently as she would like.

Ms. Bergstue-Hall communicated with staff members in multiple ways to keep abreast of all issues and to provide support. She met with her teachers weekly, by grade level, to plan and strategize instruction. She also conducted monthly staff meetings and circulated weekly one-page staff bulletins that identified the events of the week, staff news and upcoming events. Ms. Bergstue-Hall also reviewed the monthly progress report for each student in every subject with each individual teacher.

The district values professional development and provides four days a year for each teacher. Each building is also required to provide teachers with 12 paid hours of professional development. These hours were generally provided by adding time to regularly-scheduled staff meetings. New teachers are provided with an additional 10 hours of professional development and three days of in-service prior to the start of school. Throughout the year, teachers were encouraged to conduct their own presentations, drawing on their experiences, and to share ideas and strategies during lunch and planning time. The principal also made it possible for teachers to observe other classroom teachers.

Under the Cleveland Literacy System, Teacher Leadership Teams, comprised of teachers at each grade level, from each building, receive training at the District Professional Development Center two nights a month. Each Teacher Leadership Team then brings the information back to the building to share with the other teachers. The district target is that the best-performing schools receive training in their buildings once a month. The leadership team presented the information at the voluntary professional development sessions (eight last year) that were held at MacArthur, which most teachers attended. The team also presented at some extended staff meetings. Following the building presentations, the principal provided time for teachers to implement the areas presented, then conducted a "Learning Walk" to see if they were being implemented and to identify other needs the teacher might have. Professional development topics (i.e., ADHD, Guidelines for IBA referrals) were also presented at the monthly staff meetings. Douglas MacArthur was one of the first 30 schools to go on to the second level of training.

The Cleveland Initiative for Education (CIE) works with the district's principals' professional development committee to fund many training opportunities. Ms. Bergstue-Hall attended several of the CIE training sessions. Two years ago, she completed training on what it means to be an effective administrator, which she found very helpful. Ms. Bergstue-Hall was appointed an executive administrator (one of twenty) by the CEO to mentor other principals and help their students achieve targets set by the district. She also completed a two-year CIE training to be a coach. This past year Ms. Bergstue-Hall was trained as a mentor through the Stupski Foundation, which funds large-city programs.

ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

Douglas MacArthur worked in partnership with parents to help their children become independent learners and reach their potential. Since 1999, the parents received and signed a school compact in which they committed to support their child's education. The compacts had a checklist of activities, and the parent identified to what level he or she was able or willing to commit. Parents were instrumental in seeing that the students' daily homework assignments are completed and returned. In the upper

grades, a homework packet was sent home every Monday and was due the following Monday. Incentives were offered for getting homework handed in early. Progress reports and fliers from the office were sent home weekly to

"This is the best-kept secret on the West Side! The atmosphere in my son's class helped him so much. He feels safe and accepted here." A parent of a student with disabilities

show parents their student's work and how they had done. All work sent home had to be signed. Parents were encouraged to call before and after school hours.

The challenge of having families who lived far from school was addressed by hardcopy and email communications, as well as phone calls to parents. Although the school encouraged volunteers, there was not a large on-site parent group. Most of the parents worked; many did not have cars. To get to the school, parents would need to use public transportation or ride the school bus with their child and stay all day. In the past, the school would hold meetings at different times and at different locations. This past year, meetings could not be held at the school in the evening because there was no custodial help and union rules prohibited volunteers from doing any custodial duties. Despite these obstacles, over 100 people attended each open house or program at the school.

Every building in the district has a family liaison who is responsible for working with the parent group. Family liaisons receive updates once a week on topics relevant to the district so they can

"I feel comfortable with what the school is doing. I follow in the footsteps of the staff – as they implement change, I do, too. I take their advice." A parent of a student with disabilities

inform parents. The liaisons also link parents to school and community resources, such as day care providers and tutoring opportunities.

Partnerships with businesses and universities, as well as adult volunteer tutors, had enhanced the effort of engaging parents and the community and helped to overcome the challenges of limited resources, both fiscal and human. The school had a variety of partnerships with local and national organizations and businesses. For example, The Ohio State University extension program worked to cultivate a garden plot with each fourth grade class. The school had an "Edible Garden" on its property where students planted and harvested fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers in connection with OSU's Master Gardeners' Program. NASA had donated old computers. The school worked with volunteers from Junior Achievement. The University of Baldwin Wallace, Cleveland State University and Notre Dame used the site for teacher training activities. Adult volunteers also worked with individual students three days a week through the Helping One Student To Succeed (HOSTS) program.

Teachers demonstrated that they were invested in the success of the students in their school by writing a number of grant proposals. For example, teachers were pursuing a grant from the Cleveland Schools Book Fund that provides in-service sessions for teachers, follow-up activities for students and 50 books for each class. Other grants were submitted to and approved by The Cleveland Excellence In Education Grants Program to provide incentives and awards for attendance and academics and supplemental instructional materials.

CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

One of the goals of the school was for every child to want to come to school and to learn as much as the child was able. The school promoted positive behavior in many

different ways. The school-wide kindness theme, Kindness Counts, is one example.

Staff members gave out Kindness coupons when they saw a student doing something kind for another person. After the student's name was put on the coupon, it was placed in a jar. A drawing was held each month at

"The school has a family atmosphere, with a dedicated nurturing staff that is committed to make every child successful." Julie Bergstue-Hall, principal

the Citizenship Assembly, and the ten students whose names were drawn could pick prizes. The drawing was preceded by a drum roll and applause from everyone.

Since 2001, staff and student achievement in the areas of scholarship, citizenship and attendance were recognized in monthly assemblies. Following each assembly, a reception was held in honor of every class's Student of the Month, whose picture was displayed in the hall throughout the month. Other ways in which positive behavior was promoted included the use of a special Word of the Month, such as "dependable." The Word of the Month was introduced to the school through a student-performed skit. Thereafter, all students worked on demonstrating the behavior called for by that word for the month. Every Friday, the principal visited each class with a prize bag, asking for two students in each class who had best demonstrated the sought-after behavior (for example, dependability) that week. Those two students then got to pick a prize.

Consistent discipline was important at Douglas MacArthur. The school had a building discipline plan, and every classroom had the same six rules. Expectations for behavior, like academics, were clearly stated and posted. Assertive discipline steps were used, progressing from being given a verbal warning to being sent to the office. All office referrals were processed according to district policy. Every attempt was made to keep students, even those who caused discipline problems, in school. The school had a Friday lunch suspension as well as half day and full day in-school suspension options. When the dress code of uniforms was initiated when the school became year round, parents welcomed the change.

The school had a peer mediation program, W.A.V.E.(The Winning Against Violent Environments conflict resolution program). The school received a stipend to train 25-30 students as peer mediators. Students signed themselves up or a teacher could refer them. Ms. Bergstue-Hall reported that the program was very effective.

Due to financial difficulties and district-wide reassignment of teachers and students, this excellent School of Promise has been closed. However, the year-round program was moved to a brand new school, Memorial, opening in August 2005, expanding this year-round opportunity to a much larger student population.

"I think the school is pretty good because the autistic program is good. There are some good teachers and not many bullies. We get breakfast free, there are bathrooms in the room, there are mountain bikes in the gym, and there are gardens. There are lots of books, good art, music, recorders, xylophones, keyboards and a piano." A special education student

What does the data say?



